

Like many of us, Congressman BISHOP said he was committed to doing everything possible to locate each and every American missing in action and to repatriate their remains.

Our keynote speaker was Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Togo D. West, Jr., who eloquently addressed the Braintrust about this being an important opportunity to think about the issues that affect veterans in this country from the African-American perspective. He also said that the Braintrust provides an excellent forum to discuss what we all can bring to challenging issues affecting veterans, and because these issues affect veterans, they affect all of us. In addressing the "Two E's: Education and Entrepreneurship," he asked why are fewer African Americans participating in Montgomery GI Bill benefits than in previous eras? Why was this happening after decades of African Americans pursuing civil rights, better housing, a higher standard of living, and opportunities for themselves and their children, particularly when this benefit is something earned through military service?

Secretary West also stated that entrepreneurship is a key to unlocking opportunity for veterans to be able to participate in the American dream. He indicated that last year, VA addressed the question of minority entrepreneurship, and he said that VA leads all other Federal agencies, in terms of percentages, in making grants to small and disadvantaged business. Secretary West agreed that VA would undertake a new partnership with the Braintrust as a way to digest information and put it to use. Secretary West urged persistence and determination in addressing these pressing issues, saying that for like the "Field of Dreams," if we have the determination, the resources will be found. Secretary West urged participants of the Braintrust to examine all of these issues and questions, and he expressed thanks for the role the Braintrust plays in this discussion.

At the conclusion of Secretary West's speech, Mr. Wayne Smith, President and CEO of the Black Revolutionary War Patriots Foundation presented him with the first Black Revolutionary War Patriots Commemorative Coin, legislated by Congress to commemorate Black Patriotism, and the 275th anniversary of the birth of Crispus Attucks, the first African American killed during the American Revolution. Following this very moving moment, Mr. Michael Handy, Director of the New York City Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs and Mr. Morrocco Coleman, Assistant Director for the Office of Veterans Programs for the Georgia Department of Labor, presided over a special awards presentation to Mr. Ron Armstead, Executive Coordinator for the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Veterans Braintrust, and Mr. Anthony Hawkins, Associate Director of the Center for Minority Veterans at the Department of Veterans Affairs. These awards were given on behalf of the entire Veterans Braintrust Executive Committee in appreciation of their outstanding leadership, commitment, and service to the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Congressional Black Caucus, and other Members of Congress over the past 10 years.

Other 10th anniversary awards were presented to 30 exemplary veterans for their national and equally important community service: Dr. Doris "Lucki" Allen, Dr. Irving Allen, M.D.; Mr. Ramsey Alexander, Jr.; Mr. Kent Amos; Mr. Charles Ballard; Mr. Lafayette

Barnes; Dr. Anne Bell, M.D.; Mr. Bruce Bolling; Col. Mary Boyd; Dr. Howard Brabson; Ms. Thelma Branch, USNA; Ms. Sheila Chamberlain; Brig. Gen. Robert Cocroft, USAR; Ms. Nora Dunn, RN; Mr. Calvin Gross; Mr. Roger "Kevvy" Harris; Mr. Duane Jackson; Ms. Dorothy Johnson; Mr. John Johnson; Mrs. Norma King-Joiner; Mr. Alvin Jones; Mr. William Leftwich, III; Mr. Leonard Long; Dr. Shirley Marks, M.D., M.P.H.; Col. Anita McMiller, USA, Ret.; Mr. Michael Neely; Col. Felix "Pete" Peterson, Jr., USA, Ret.; Mr. Harold Raymond; Ms. Lizette Rhones; Mr. Michael Robbins; Lt. Col. Jordan Simmons, III, USA, Ret.; Mr. William Sims; Mr. Peters Spears; Mr. Ralph Thomas III; Mr. Charles Tompkins; Assemblyman Darryl Towns; Mr. Larry Williams; Mr. Carmen Wilson II; Dr. Reginald Wilson; Mr. Jacob "J.J." Chestnut, USAF, Ret. (Posthumous); Black Patriots Foundation; Troops to Teachers Program, Department of Defense, Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support; and the Veterans Education Project.

The Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Veterans Braintrust activities closed with a tenth anniversary reception co-hosted by the Black Patriots Foundation, the Veterans Benefits Clearinghouse, Inc., the Gatehouse Group, Inc. and Amistad Associates. More than 100 veterans, family members and friends gathered to celebrate the accomplishments of the past 10 years and to renew old friendships. Veterans will always hold a very special place in my heart and I look forward to working together with African American veterans representatives and advocates in order to present a strong national voice for veterans. I thank Dr. Elizabeth Allen, Mr. Arthur Barham, Mr. Harold "Lightbulb" Bryant, Mr. Ralph Cooper, Mr. Morrocco Coleman, Mr. Michael Handy, Mr. Thomas Harris, Ms. Lane Knox, Mr. Reginald Lawrence, Mr. Job Mashariki, Dr. Erwin Parson, Mr. Clyde Poag, Mr. Wayne Smith, Ms. Arlene Williams, Ms. Joann Williams, Dr. James Woodard, Mr. Arthur Wright, and Mr. Thomas Wynn, Sr. for their commitment, dedication, and perseverance. I also want to thank the Congressional staff members Mr. Nick Martinelli, Ms. Brittley Wise, volunteer Mr. Ron Armstead, Rev. Rosita Mathews, and forum evaluators Dr. Brenda Moore, Dr. Brenda "BJ" Jarmon, Dr. Lorraine Blackman, and Dr. Phillip Schervish, for their hard work and dedication.

TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE SIDNEY P. YATES

SPEECH OF

HON. BOBBY L. RUSH

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 1, 1998

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Speaker, I come before you today in recognition of the distinguished career of my colleague and friend Congressman SIDNEY YATES. His service to his district and commitment to the amelioration of the lives of his constituents has long been a source of admiration for me.

YATES' 48 years as a United States Congressman has been a gift to the city of Chicago, the state of Illinois and the nation on a whole. He is responsible for channeling billions of dollars into various local projects ranging from the Chicago Deep Tunnel project to the Chicago Shoreline project. Additionally,

YATES served as the House's chief defender of the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities. During the Bush years, when the NEA was under attack and politically unpopular, he insightfully recognized the institution's importance and successfully fought for its preservation for future generations of artists and art enthusiasts.

The assiduous and tireless efforts of SID YATES have never gone unnoticed by his constituents. Every two years, his general election percentages have consistently been robust and resilient.

So, today, I salute "Chicago's statesman." YATES' lifetime of service is a standard of excellence that I would encourage all of my colleagues to emulate.

DR. CARL M. KUTTLE HONORED
AS OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY
COLLEGE PRESIDENT OF THE
YEAR

HON. C.W. BILL YOUNG

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 2, 1998

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to inform my colleagues that Dr. Carl M. Kuttler, Jr., President of the St. Petersburg Junior College, has just been named the outstanding community college president of the year by the National Association of Community College Trustees.

Having the privilege to represent the St. Petersburg Junior College, I know of the great work that Dr. Kuttler has done these past 20 years as President to make it one of the premiere colleges in our nation.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, the college ranks third in the Nation in the number of Liberal Arts and Science degrees conferred, fourth in the number of associate degrees awarded in Health Professions and Related Sciences, fourth in the number of associate degrees awarded in Nursing, and fourth in the total number of associate degrees awarded.

Dr. Kuttler has devoted his life to the growth of the St. Petersburg Junior College, having served in various capacities for 32 years. He was first a student at the college beginning in 1958 and in his second year was elected president of the student government, so he understands the needs of the students and faculty from various perspectives.

In addition to raising the academic level of excellence at the college, Dr. Kuttler has also established a number of unique programs that respond to the needs of our State and our community. In 1998, he negotiated a special agreement under which the Allstate Insurance Company agreed to donate to the college land and facilities valued at \$11.2 million. With this gift in place, Dr. Kuttler and the college have secured Federal and State grants totaling more than \$30 million to establish a state of the art Southeastern Public Safety Institute, which provides training to Federal, State, and local law enforcement officers and emergency response personnel.

Under his leadership, the college also responded to an unmet need for trained health care professionals by raising \$3.4 million in gifts, and \$6.5 million in State funds, to establish one of our Nation's finest allied health

education centers at the St. Petersburg Junior College's Caruth Health Education Center.

Pamela Jo Davis, the Chairman of the college's Board of Trustees who nominated Dr. Kuttler for this award, said, "He personifies the 21st Century president, demonstrating all the global vision and community caring that balanced, successful leaders must have."

In presenting the association's most prestigious award to Dr. Kuttler, Ray Taylor, the President of the Association of Community College Trustees, said, "I only wish all of the Nation's 1,100 community colleges had somebody as outstanding as Dr. Kuttler."

Mr. Speaker, speaking for the people of the 10th Congressional District I represent, I can say that we are proud and fortunate to have an educational leader who is as committed to his students, faculty, and staff as Carl Kuttler. It is a most fitting honor that his peers across the country have recognized him with such a great honor this month.

TRIBUTE TO JUDGE SONIA SOTOMAYOR

HON. JOSÉ E. SERRANO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 2, 1998

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate and to pay tribute to Judge Sonia Sotomayor, an outstanding individual who has dedicated her life to public service. She was confirmed today by the Senate for the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. Clinton nominated Sotomayor in June 1997 and after an arduous process, the Senate ratified her nomination by voting 68-28. The 2nd Circuit Court includes New York, Connecticut and Vermont.

Judge Sotomayor was born and raised in the South Bronx. After graduating summa cum laude from Princeton University, she earned her Juris Doctor from Yale Law School. I have known her personally for many years, and I am very familiar with her background, experience, character, and personality. She is a person of the highest personal and professional integrity.

Mr. Speaker, since her appointment to the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York by President George Bush in 1992, Judge Sotomayor has distinguished herself and has received continuous recognition for her outstanding performance. During her tenure, she has been reversed only six times in what is considered perhaps the most litigious and scrutinized district court in the United States.

Being the first Hispanic woman to serve on the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, Judge Sotomayor is well known and highly respected by her peers and the different communities for her sensitivity, professionalism, integrity and sound judgment. Her confirmation brings to the Court an outstanding judge at the same time that it expands its ethnic composition.

This is the kind of issue that should be discussed in the classrooms. She is a role model for all Hispanics. Judge Sotomayor has set an example of how success is available for all of those who persevere to achieve their goals. She is an inspiration for many Puerto Ricans and for the people in the Bronx who are trying to break the cycle of poverty.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in commending Judge Sonia Sotomayor for her outstanding achievements and in wishing her continued success as Judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

THANKING THE HEROES OF THE STORM OF '98

HON. JAMES T. WALSH

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 2, 1998

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, this past Labor Day my home district endured one of the most furious storms ever to assault Central New York. A violent line of thunderstorms, which the National Weather Service calls a "derecho," began their attack just after one o'clock in the morning. With swirling winds surpassing one hundred miles an hour, Mother Nature unleashed her wrath—ripping roofs off buildings, smashing trees against houses, snapping telephone poles and leaving a path of desolate neighborhoods and a fractured infrastructure.

As the gusts finally deteriorated into breezes and the rain subsided, the members of the Central New York community showed their true spirit. People helped one another remove the debris from their yards and newspapers were full of stories about neighborhood heroes. But there is a group of "professional" heroes, too—the utility workers, telephone linemen, postal workers, the National Guard, fire fighters, local police and state, county, city and town public works crews. Not to mention the "official" heroes, those elected representatives of the people who did their jobs with the energy and skill we always expect. Emergency workers from all municipalities and members of the New York Air and Army National Guard emerged to aid those in need. New York Governor George Pataki, Onondaga County Executive Nicholas Pirro and Syracuse Mayor Roy Bernardi took immediate action to guarantee a rapid recovery for all affected. Working in conjunction with utility company crews on loan from all over New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maine, New Jersey and the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec, the members of local fire and police departments, emergency and medical personnel and employees of local telephone and cable companies as well as the Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation toiled for countless hours to restore power and phone service.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of my office's role in working with Federal Emergency Management Agency Director James Witt to mitigate the aftershock of this disaster. Indeed we were on the phone within eight hours of the end of the storm and FEMA responded quickly and professionally. I ask my colleagues to join me in commending those who contributed their sweat, tears and labor to the recovery effort in Central New York during this time of crisis.

POLKA POWER

HON. JAMES A. BARCIA

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 2, 1998

Mr. BARCIA. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to pay tribute to a man whose musical talents

have brought much joy and laughter to all who know him, Mr. Roger Balcer. On Sunday, October 4, Roger Balcer will be inducted into the Michigan Polka Music Hall of Fame.

Born in 1940, the oldest son of Barney and Henrietta Balcer, music was in young Roger's blood. Following in the footsteps of his uncle Leo Balcer, Roger too wanted to become a celebrated accordion player. He began to develop his skills early on, beginning accordion lessons at age eight. Even at this young age, everyone realized Roger had a talent. He took this talent and formed a band with his high school friends, Jerry Kolsowski, Fred Lenisz, and Tom Reder. In their first engagement, these four charmed the crowd at the Polish Falcon's Club of Saginaw.

However, Roger did not stop here. Along with playing in the band, Roger began singing with Choir Chopin under the directorship of Polish National Alliance Conductor Ted Nedzielski. Being a member of the acclaimed Choir Chopin gave Roger the opportunity to share his music with audiences in cities around the country.

As Roger grew older, his musical career continued to blossom. An electrician by day, Roger was a musician by night. He became a member of the Ray Massicotte Orchestra, playing at the "Shamrock" four nights a week. He soon began playing weekend engagements at the Washington Club. Roger also played Mexican Polkas at the Savoy in Saginaw as a member of Mike Luna's Band. Roger recorded albums with Tom Reder and John Lipinski that were played on Otto Hubner's Polka Program. He spent sixteen years as a member of the Kings Four Group playing at various country clubs around Michigan. After taking a few years away from his music, Roger became a favorite entertainer of the Seniors at the State Hospital in Caro.

In 1984, Roger and his uncle Leo became representatives for the Iorio computerized accordion. He traveled to countless polka festivals demonstrating this instrument and expanding his exposure to many types of music. Today, Roger still performs at numerous functions playing music ranging from Jazz to Irish folk music. However, his first love is still polkas. Roger also spends time with his charming wife, Mary Ann and his four sons, Matthew, Steven, Mark and Vincent.

Mr. Speaker, Roger Balcer has dedicated his life to bringing music and joy to others. I ask you and our colleagues to roll out a barrel of applause and recognize the outstanding accomplishments of Roger Balcer as he is inducted into the Michigan Polka Music Hall of Fame.

THE HIGH COST OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 1, 1998

Ms. JACKSON-LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the "Prescription Drug Fairness for Seniors Act of 1998." It is a cruel fact that America's senior citizens are the subject of widespread price discrimination. While the federal government and large HMOs pay little, our seniors pay twice as much for their prescription drugs.